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EVALUATION OF ION MICROSCOPIC SPATIAL RESOLUTION AND  
IMAGE QUALITY(U) CORNELL UNIV ITHACA NY BAKER LAB  
M T BERNIUS ET AL. 16 SEP 85 TR-16 N00014-80-C-0530

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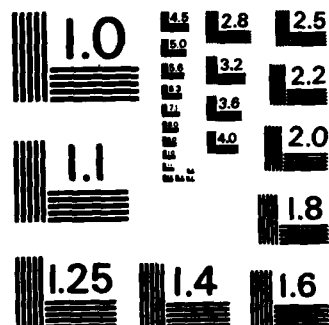
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1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION  
Unclassified

2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

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4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)

TECHNICAL REPORT #16

6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY6b. OFFICE SYMBOL  
(If applicable)

6c. ADDRESS (City, State and ZIP Code)

Baker Laboratory of Chemistry  
Ithaca, New York 14853-13018a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING  
ORGANIZATION  
OFFICE OF NAVAL RESEARCH8b. OFFICE SYMBOL  
(If applicable)

8c. ADDRESS (City, State and ZIP Code)

3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT

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5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)

7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION

7b. ADDRESS (City, State and ZIP Code)

9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

CONTRACT N00014-80-0538

10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NOS.

PROGRAM  
ELEMENT NO.PROJECT  
NO.TASK  
NO.WORK UNIT  
NO.

NR051-736

11. TITLE (Include Security Classification)

EVALUATION OF ION MICROSCOPIC SPATIAL RESOLUTION

12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) AND IMAGE QUALITY

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13a. TYPE OF REPORT

Technical

13b. TIME COVERED

FROM TO

14. DATE OF REPORT (Yr., Mo., Day)

September 16, 1985

15. PAGE COUNT

2

16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION

Prepared for publication in Analytical Chemistry

17. COSATI CODES

FIELD GROUP SUB. GR.

18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)

Resolution Image Quality Ion Microscopy  
Secondary Ion Mass Spectrometry MTF

19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)

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21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Unclassified

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OFFICE OF NAVAL RESEARCH

Contract N00014-80-0538

Task No. NR051-736

TECHNICAL REPORT NO. 16

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Prepared for publication

in

Analytical Chemistry

Cornell University  
Department of Chemistry  
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Ithaca, New York 14853

September 16, 1985



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# EVALUATION OF ION MICROSCOPIC SPATIAL RESOLUTION AND IMAGE QUALITY

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study of factors that influence image quality in the ion microscope will motivate modification of the existing configuration in order to improve the lateral resolution and the absolute sensitivity. The micro-test patterns provide an absolute scale of image evaluation and thus are used to characterize the imaging capabilities of the SIMS analyzer. The efforts anticipate the decreasing dimensions of the next generation of submicron structures.

## Introduction

The imaging mode of a stigmatic SIMS microanalyzer such as the CAMECA IMS-3f provides the unique capability of producing a magnified localized mapping of the elemental constituents on a sample surface in real time. The principle function of the instrument when used in the microscope mode is to resolve detail present in the specimen. Magnification is necessary to make the image of sufficient size so that the smallest microfeatures resolved by the instrument can be seen by the eye. Therefore it is convenient to compare instrumental parameters of the ion microscope in terms of its inherent resolution capabilities.

The lateral resolution obtained with the CAMECA instrument is generally quoted anywhere between 0.3 - 1.0  $\mu\text{m}$ . A critical evaluation of such a range becomes essential before attempting to extract information from the ion image. An accurate knowledge of the spatial resolution and the factors that influence it defines the scope of microfeature recognition as is necessary prior to image processing techniques.

## Criterion for Image Resolution

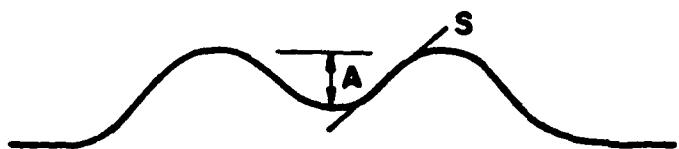
Standard test patterns were fabricated using electron beam lithography/ metallic evaporation and mark removal techniques in the form of even square waves (or simple step function standards). These were imaged on the CAMECA IMS-3f stigmatic SIMS microanalyzer; the images being digitized on a micro-photodensitometer afterwards. These digitized images were analyzed and yielded signal traces of the square wave pattern that were gaussian in nature.

These intensity profiles (graphically illustrated in Fig. 1) have a characteristic slope and amplitude typical to the imaging instrument with the instrumental parameters used. The slope and amplitude are isolated in an edge profile (or edge spread function of the instrument) which is deconvolved to yield the line spread function of the instrument. It can be shown that by measuring the width of this curve at the inflection points a quantitative measure of the spatial resolution of the imaging instrument is achieved. \*

## SIMS SPATIAL RESOLUTION METHODOLOGY



STEP FUNCTION STANDARD



RESULTING SIGNAL TRACE

[ AMPLITUDE (A)  $\rightarrow$  CONTRAST  
SLOPE (S)  $\rightarrow$  RESOLUTION ]



EDGE SPREAD FUNCTION (ESF)  
FROM SLOPE



DECONVOLUTE ESF TO  
LINE SPREAD FUNCTION (LSF)

[ AT INFLECTION POINTS OF LSF IS  
SPATIAL MEASURE OF RESOLUTION ]

### Resolution Evaluation

Results indicate that the character of the sample (i.e. resistivity, surface texture, etc.) and the instrumental operating conditions (vacuum, contrast aperture setting, instrumental field of view, magnification factor, and microchannelplate gain) directly affect the relative resolution of the ion image. The best image resolution of  $0.53 \pm 0.03 \mu\text{m}$ . was achieved using the  $150 \mu\text{m}$ . field of view with the highest magnification (250X as measured at the fluorescent screen), the smallest contrast aperture ( $20 \mu\text{m}$ .) and an operating vacuum of  $10^{-7}$  torr.

\* The associated proof is illustrated in detail in the paper which will be published January 1986, in ANALYTICAL CHEMISTRY.

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